

the space for the incoming workers, but was satisfied that additional construction costs will not hamper expected savings to the taxpayers.

"They said there's still significant payback by doing that," he said of the BRAC staff's review of the move, "and that was the major objection that they had."

He said the commission felt it was only fair to keep open the Arsenal's 251-job Civilian Personnel Office and Civilian Human Resource Agency. It was originally slated to move to Fort Riley, Kan., as part of a sweeping consolidation of defense personnel offices.

But Mr. Skinner urged the panel to delete it because it was targeted as part of a complete closure of the Rock Island Arsenal, and the move was never re-examined after the Pentagon decided to keep the Arsenal open.

"They had no chance to be heard, it wasn't even considered, and on that basis it wasn't fair. So we got a little life," Mr. Skinner said.

He also defended the closure of the Arsenal's 301-job Defense Finance and Accounting Service office. The commission voted to keep other offices open that the Pentagon targeted for closure, but Mr. Skinner said they were on bases of higher military and had the worst economic closure impact among DFAS locations.

He said the overall result for the Arsenal was better than it could have been. "They dodged a major bullet. Not perfect, but it could have been a lot worse."

GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION AND PROGRAM PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2005

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, we are facing times of record spending. Whether it is in the form of relief to the hurricane ravaged gulf coast, financing the war on terrorism, or meeting our obligations to seniors with the Medicare prescription drug benefit, Federal spending is higher now than ever. We have committed ourselves to funding these priorities.

In doing so, I believe we must also look for ways to save in other areas to offset some of these costs. I would liken our current fiscal situation to that of any common American household. When emergencies or unforeseen obligations arise, such as an illness or a major repair, you find a way to pay the bill. But in doing so, you must also look at your household budget and find places to save.

So I come to the Senate floor today to speak a little bit about legislation I recently introduced to require regular review of Federal programs with the goal of identifying areas where savings can be made. S. 1399, the Government Reorganization and Program Performance Improvement Act, will create the necessary mechanisms to require Congress and the executive branch to regularly and formally examine whether Federal programs and agencies are achieving, or have achieved desired results for the American people, and make the necessary adjustments.

The bill would do this through the creation of a sunset commission and individual results commissions. The sunset commission would hold the Federal Government accountable for per-

formance by reviewing and providing recommendations to retain, restructure, or end Federal agencies or programs. Congress and the President would enact a 10-year schedule for the administration to assess the performance of all Federal agencies and programs. Acting on those assessments, the seven-member bipartisan sunset commission, appointed by the President in consultation with Congress, will recommend ways to improve effectiveness and spend taxpayer dollars more wisely.

The commission will provide an important framework to facilitate the reform, restructuring, or possible elimination of those agencies or programs unable to demonstrate expected performance results during their scheduled review. It will also help to identify those programs that have achieved their intended purposes or outlived their usefulness.

A second key feature of this important measure is the creation of individual results commissions targeted at specific programs or policy areas where duplication and overlapping jurisdiction hinder reform. Again, these seven-member bipartisan commissions, appointed by the President in consultation with Congress, will consider administration proposals to improve the performance of various programs and agencies by restructuring and consolidation. This will reduce unnecessary costs and waste paid for by the American taxpayer.

We need to continue to evaluate the way the Federal Government operates and look for ways to make it more cost effective for the long term. I believe this legislation presents a good step toward dealing with the large number of Federal programs out there, many of which are, frankly, wasteful and unnecessary. Many also duplicate other Federal, State and private efforts. S. 1399 provides a commonsense framework for reorganization and review of Federal programs, and provides for a way to abolish them if determined unnecessary.

S. 1399 is a good government measure. It is about efficiency, accountability to the American taxpayer, and identifying potential savings. It is a fiscally responsible measure that will provide a way for the Federal Government to save even as it meets its spending obligations in the future. I invite my colleagues to take a serious look at this proposal and to join me in advancing this effort.

AUGUST 2005 CODEL TO LATIN AMERICA

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, from August 14 to the 22, I traveled to Latin America to investigate first hand important issues relating to national security, immigration and the war on drugs. I would like to share the details of this trip and some of the insights I gained with my colleagues.

On Sunday, August 14, we flew to Havana, Cuba. Upon our arrival we drove

to the U.S. Mission where we met with James Cason, our chief of mission, and members of his staff. I started off the meeting by asking my hosts if Cuba could help the U.S. combat the smuggling of illegal drugs into our country. Mr. Rod Rojas of the U.S. Coast Guard, who currently serves as the U.S. Drug Interdiction Specialist based in Havana, noted that there is a good working relationship between the Coast Guard and the Cuban Border Guard on drug issues. It primarily takes the form of the Cubans sharing information with the United States as to suspicious ships passing through its territorial waters. The United States then interdicts these ships when they cross into U.S. waters. While the number of such reports has fallen in recent years, Mr. Rojas believes that this is a testament to the success of Cuban efforts: now that they know they will be reported, drug smugglers seem to be avoiding Cuban waters.

These reports confirm my long-held view that we should be working more closely with Cuba on drug interdiction efforts. This is why since 2001 I have sought to include language in the Foreign Operations appropriations bill to fund joint drug interdiction efforts between our two countries. This language is in the Senate version of the fiscal year 2006 bill, and I intend to press to secure its retention in the bill through conference.

From this positive report on the drug interdiction situation, our conversation turned to a troubling report on the current human rights situation in Cuba. Mr. Cason told us that there has been a deterioration of human rights in Cuba in recent years as Castro has cracked down on political dissidents. In 2003, Castro jailed 75 dissidents and has thus far released fewer than 20 from this group. These arrests were followed by others including the arrest of over 30 dissidents earlier this year. In addition to arrests, Castro has begun to employ other atrocious practices including having dissidents assaulted on the streets and generating demonstrations at the homes of dissidents to prevent them from stepping outside.

This repression has spread to the economic realm as well. In the late 1990s, Castro had opened a very limited window to free enterprise in Cuba by issuing licenses for private businesses. Had this trend continued, Cuba could have followed the path of China and Vietnam towards a limited market economy and higher living standards. Instead, Castro has abandoned this liberalization and cut back the number of licenses for private business. Both politically and economically, there are signs that Cuba is going backwards.

Finally, our conversation turned to the issue of immigration. In an effort to provide a legal outlet for immigration and avoid the massive boatlifts of the past, the United States allows 20,000 Cubans to legally immigrate every year. This number includes family reunifications, visas given out by